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May 31, 1993

Children's Television
MM Docket No. 93-48
Secretary
FCC
Room 222
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Washington, D.C. 20554

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

To whom it may concern:

I am a children's advocate in a battered women's shelter. I constantly work with children who have witnessed a tremendous amount of violence in their homes. At the shelter we work to provide a safe environment, one where no abuse is permitted and where everyone is treated respectfully. The one loophole in our goal is television programming. More often than not, I walk into the living room to find violence on TV and the kids glued to the screen. I cringe because the violence blurs the line between reality and fantasy. The news is real. Shows such as "Cops" are real. Some movies depict realistic violence even though it is being recreated. Some movies have unrealistic violence. Cartoons are not real. Yet these children have difficulty defining that line between fantasy and reality. If their fathers beat, shot, stabbed or raped their moms in front of them who is to say Arnold and his ilk can't walk in the front door with loaded uzis? Violence is an everyday reality for these kids--and many others who never enter a shelter--and the violence in cartoons is merely an extension of that reality. It is not fantasy to them.

Some say violence does not beget violence. However, if kids repeatedly see that fighting is the way to solve problems--and watch their heroes and idols doing so--and see that the winner gets his/her way, then they will learn that. They learn that having the muscle or the weapon will get you what you want. At the same time they are not learning other non-violent conflict resolution skills or having them role-modeled. Kids themselves recognize that cartoons are filled with violence. They ask why it is acceptable for them to watch the Ninja Turtles but not Rambo. Afterall, it is *all* violence. And it is violence they see and hear about in their lives.

I would like to share with you the words of a battered woman that highlight the profound, distorted view of violence that TV promotes. She spoke of how her three year-old son has learned through cartoons that there is always a "good guy" and a "bad guy" and how that "bad guy" is frequently a woman. She noted how this female "bad guy" is often depicted as a witch and cited the many classic fairy tales as well as modern ones such as The Little Mermaid in which the evil force is a woman. Her son calls her the witch because she is the one who disciplines him, the one who puts him to bed and tells him to eat his vegetables while his father--and her husband--neglects him. When Dad brutally hit and kicked her, their son looked on, smiling and clapping because Dad was beating the "bad guy"-- just like on TV.

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As our culture grows more and more violent, it is clear that we need to begin making changes somewhere, and I believe television programming is a good place to start. I urge you to boldly take the lead and remember that you are doing this for the future of our children and our world. Do not let those who cry censorship make you falter. It is not censorship to remove violence from TV and present alternatives that are educational, peaceful and fun. Television is a very influential force in our children's lives. Please work to make it a positive influence.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jami M. Bodonyi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a stylized "B".

Jami M. Bodonyi